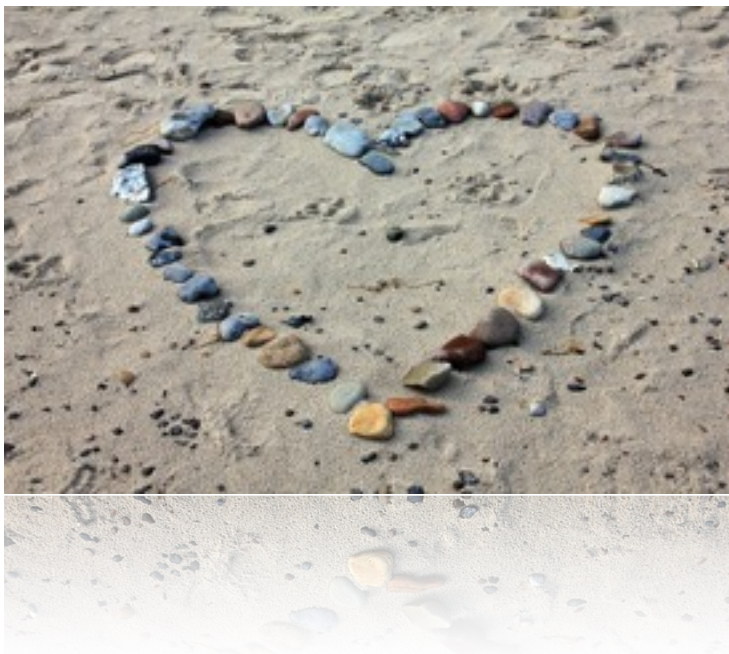


Mark: Chapter 15

Disciple/apostle = learn/do.

In this second to the last Module of *Mark*, we continue to learn from the account of Jesus' disciples during "Passion Week" — Jesus' last days before crucifixion. Our focus is on the disciples. Why? To prepare ourselves to withstand animosity and opposition to the Christ and Christianity today in its more subtle, yet venomous and malicious means and methods. To strengthen ourselves to stand boldly with Christ even through the greatest fears.

URGENT QUESTIONS: If we declare vehemently from our hearts that we will stand strong with Christ (as Jesus' disciples did in the previous chapter) will we? His disciples did not. Why? The threats and the overwhelming fear. Peter, scared beyond measure in the courtyard of the High Priest at night as Jesus was questioned, denied knowing the Master. All the others fled (possibly not John, but we will discuss that in his Gospel, Part Three of this course). Question: what will it



really take for us to be present and faithful through terrifying threats and hatred of the Truth? Spiritual understanding, deep love, and incredible resolve. It will take nurturing the love of Love in us, and coming into conscious union with it as Jesus who continually spoke of his Father and His love.

Jesus Delivered to Pilate

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judaea from 26 AD 36 AD. In this capacity, Jesus was brought to him for an order of execution. The Sanhedrin was not permitted to carry out a death sentence; for this reason they brought Jesus to Pilate.

Mark 15:1 “And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.”

Matthew Henry's Commentary points out an important lesson on watching here. The “morning” referred to here was so early that it was still dark. This was not a normal meeting of the Sanhedrin, but one called in secret at night. The commentary explains, “Here we have, a *consultation* held by the great Sanhedrim for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met *early in the morning* about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out *ways and means* to get him put to death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an *uproar among the people*. The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame us for our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that *war* against Christ and thy soul, are up early; *How long then wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?*” Remember the warning Jesus gives just before Passion week — “What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch” (*Mark 13:37*).

Will you get up early and watch? and pray? Jesus spent all night in prayer often. This certainly helped prepare and strengthen him. Are we prepared and strengthened for whatever terror or injustice might come into our experience?

Early morning hours are wonderful times of communion with the Father. The mental atmosphere is still. Be still and listen for his voice. Stop talking, telling, and asking. Nurture the listening prayer. God speaks to our consciousness when we are still and quiet.

Mark 15:2 “And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.” *Matthew Henry* notes, “The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories, “*Art thou the king of the Jews?* Dost thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom the Jews expect as a temporal prince?” - “Yea,” saith Christ, “it is as *thou sayest*, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect.”

Mark 15:3-5 “And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.”

Jesus does not answer because he must allow the crucifixion to happen. Many verses of the *Psalms* correlate to events in the Passion week. *Psalms* 71 reads, “I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge” (v. 7).

Mark 15:6-15 “Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.”

Pilate realizes that Jesus is innocent. He tries to get Jesus released, but that is not the divine plan. The lesson of eternal Life, of the supremacy of Spirit, the omnipotence of Love must be taught. Jesus has known he would “lay down his life for the sheep;” but he also knows he will “take it again,” and that all of this is the will of the Father who will carry him through and bless all mankind forever (*John 10:15*).



“I am the good shepherd,” Jesus explains, **“the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep”** — Though this may be said of literal shepherds, who, even for their brute flock, have, like David, encountered “the lion and the bear” at the risk of their own lives, and still more of faithful pastors who, like the early bishops of Rome, have been the foremost to brave the fury of their enemies against the flock committed to their care; yet here, beyond doubt, it points to the struggle which was to issue in the willing surrender of the Redeemer’s own life, to save His sheep from destruction (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*).

The *Matthew Henry Commentary* adds this great insight: “Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered up Jesus for envy, because he had got such a reputation among the people as eclipsed theirs... It was easy to see, comparing the eagerness of the prosecutors with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not his guilt, but his goodness, not any thing mischievous or scandalous, but something meritorious and glorious, that they were provoked at.”

Mark 15:11-15 “But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.”



The Pharisees were very skilled in crowd control. Never get caught up in a crowd, a mass of thought bent in one direction. Maintain your free moral agency to think correctly, lovingly, spiritually, critically, Christly.

Mark 15:16-20 “And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.”

Stop a moment and think on this. The soldiers take Jesus to crucify, *but first they mock him*. To *mock* is to make fun of or mimic someone with contempt, ridicule or derision. The verb mock — as in the use that inspired the name of the mockingbird — can be simple imitation but, more often, to mock someone is to show disdain through mimicry or parody. As an adjective, mock indicates a fake or a simulation (vocabulary.com). Jesus was ridiculed, yet his great love remained constant.

Prepare to withstand mockery. What does this take?

Mark 15:21-22 “And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.”

Why did Simon the Cyrenian carry Jesus’ cross? *Matthew Henry* explains, “The soldiers, at the hour appointed, led him away from Pilate's judgment-hall to the place of execution... But lest his death, under the load of his cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the further cruelties they intended, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He *passed by, coming out of the country* or out of the *fields*, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We must not

think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprised by them. The cross was a very troublesome unwieldy load: but he that carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have his name upon the record in the book of God, though otherwise an obscure person; so that, wherever this gospel is preached; so that, wherever this gospel is preached, there shall this be told for a memorial to him: in like manner, though *no affliction, no cross, for the present, be joyous, but grievous*, yet afterward it yields a crown of glory to them that are exercised thereby.”

Simon he Cyrenian is immortalized in this story, the same as the woman who poured the very expensive oil on Jesus (doing what she could) which prepared his body for this torture. Jesus said her story would be told forever, and so is this narrative of Simon.



Mark 15:23-24 “And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.”

The soldiers played a game at the foot of the cross to “cast lots.” It was called azar.

Interestingly, the word hazard stems from this! What they were doing was hazardous to their souls. It is written: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (*Psalms* 22:18).

Mar 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.



Jesus was brought to Pilate “the sixth hour” which is 6:00 in the morning. The “third hour” according to the Jewish way of accounting time, was 9:00 in the morning — three hours later. *Matthew Henry* notes, “At that very time, when they should have been, according to the duty of their place, presiding in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it.”

Mark 15:26 “And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” This was the ‘*crime*’ for which he was being crucified.

Mark 15:27-28 “And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.” Being placed in the center signified that he was the worst of the three!

Isaiah 53 says, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (12).

Mark 15:29-30 “And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross.” The mocking continues. The ordeal is horrific enough, but the mocking must have been about unbearable.

Think on the intensity of hatred that he withstood through his love — watch and pray, be strong.



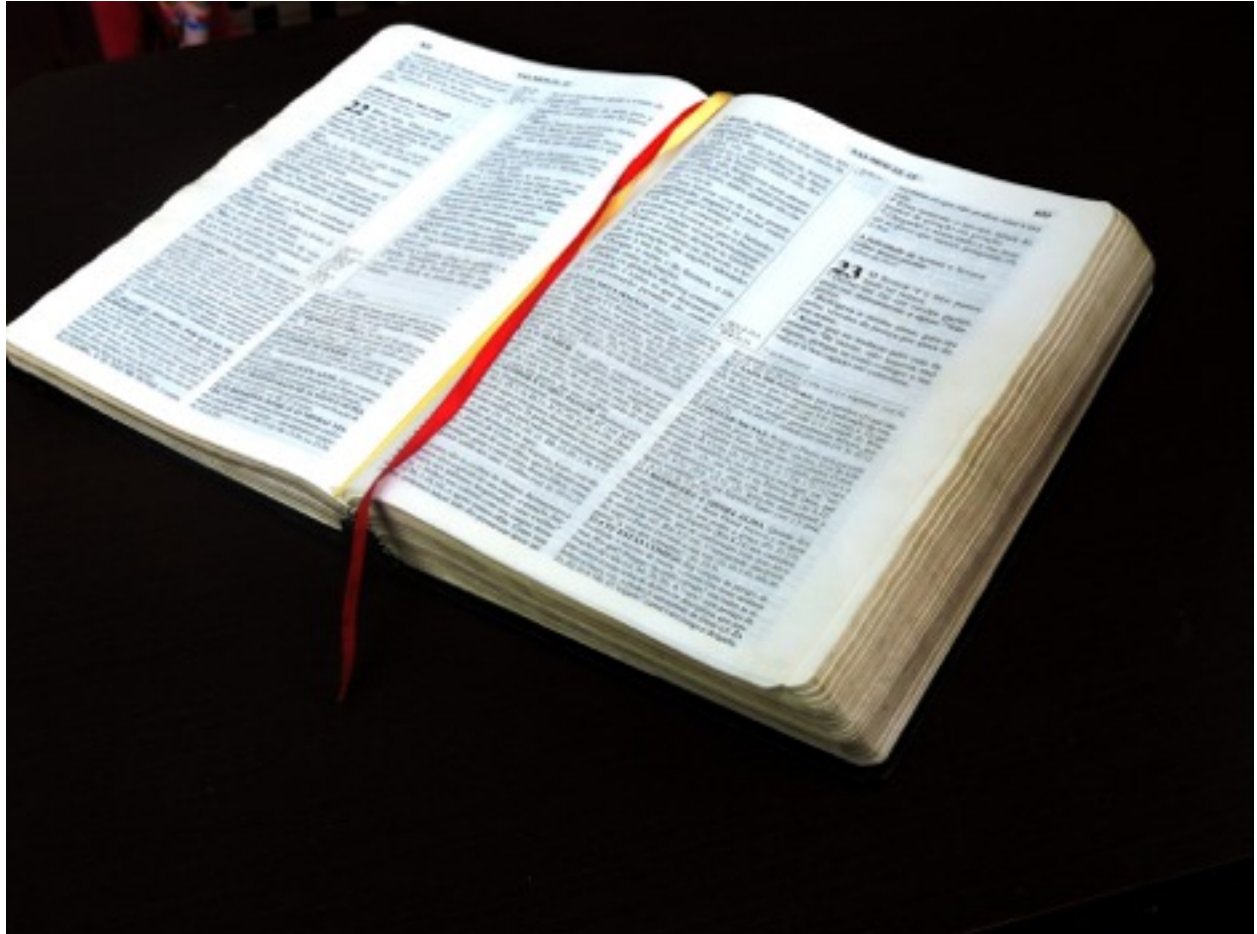
Mark 15:31 “Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.”

Come down from the cross, they say. But what was he doing? Was he not rising from the cross? Rising into the reality of Spirit wherein there is no matter, all is Spirit? Was he not rising into the Father’s arms of Love? He got off the cross in his own way, in a way that ordinary human sense cannot perceive. His Father lifted him up and took him off. While men reviled and mocked, our Father, God, comforted and saved.

Mark 15:33 “And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” This is noon to 3:00 in the afternoon.

Mark 15:24 “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Here, Jesus is quoting *Psalm 22*. Many of the verses of *Psalm 22* describe exactly what is happening at Jesus’ crucifixion. Note that the *Psalm* ends in victory.



When Jesus prays this Scripture, why hast thou forsaken me?” it is a deep plea for help. The struggle was severe. The time must be shortened; and it was. Jesus died very quickly in those hours compared to the days of agony experienced by others.

Mark 15:35 “And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.”
They do not recognize their own Scriptures! Had they realized this verse they might have understood his fulfilling of prophecy, and the end result of eternal, indestructible life, as written in the conclusion of the *Psalms*.

Mark 15:36 “And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.”

Instead, Jesus had that living water within as he taught. He had the spirit of Elias from the strengthening conversation on the mountain top in transfiguration. He was not going to come “down,” he was going upward, Spirit-ward, in victory.

Mark 15:37-38 “And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”



This is significant because the “veil” — an immense, thick curtain that separated worshippers from the Holy Place — split open. This signifies that through Jesus’ sacrifice of mortal selfhood and demonstration of immortality, the truth of God and man as one in eternal spiritual Being and Life can be seen, known, and experienced. There is no separation from God. The “veil” — the separator — is split open. It occurs at the moment of Jesus’ last intake of air, at the moment of his first full breath of Spirit alone. Believing ourselves material or physical hides the truth of our present and permanent spiritual being. Jesus was teaching a lesson that would last forever and reach everyone — the lesson of immortality and oneness with God, Spirit, Life. Jesus’ act enables us to realize, “I and my Father are one,” to be universal truth.

Mark 15:39-41 “And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.”

The women disciples were, at least, “afar off,” rather than completely absent! This verse implies that Jesus had many women disciples that “came up with him unto Jerusalem.” Women-disciples of today, do all you can with your great love, nurturing, patience, and gratitude.

Jesus Is Buried

Mark 15:42-45 “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”

If the father of one crucified was not around to claim the body, another male who was family or very close to family could ask for the body. Apparently, Mary was widowed by this time. Joseph of Arimathaea certainly was “bold” by going to Pilate with the request. It showed extreme closeness to the Master. He, in fact, may have felt he was risking his life to ask.

Pilate questions if Jesus has died already because normally it would take several days to die on a cross. By asking the centurion to come and affirm the death, the fact that Jesus was no longer breathing has been put on record secularly — attesting the truth as written in the Gospels. This is important because the Jews made a claim that the disciples stole the body from the tomb and pretended that Jesus had risen.

Mark 15:46 “And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”

Like the woman whom the disciples buffeted for being “wasteful” with expensive oil by anointing Jesus’ body during Passion week, Joseph of Arimathaea “did what he could.” Like the woman, this man, because of this act (and again using very expensive or precious materials) is immortalized — his story is still being told, studied, and contemplated.

Are we doing “what we [can]” — as the woman (and Joseph of Arimathaea)? If so, we receive a commendation from the Master. If what you can do feels like it’s not enough, do it anyway, and do it with excellence.



Mark 15:47 “And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.”

ASSIGNMENT

Watch for an opportunity to “do what you can” to help in a situation. Spare nothing and act with purest love.

QUESTIONS

What are you taking away from study of this chapter?

Write two important things you want to remember from this work:

1.

2.

In what ways can you express these things in your life in the next few days?

ASSIGNMENT

Watch for an opportunity to be with someone for support through a struggle or difficulty.

Just be there.

This expresses a disciple’s love.

This is how Jesus said people would know we are his disciples, “if ye have love one toward another.”

RECORD

1. This is what I did “that I could.”
2. This is how I expressed what I took away from this chapter.
3. This is the situation where I was “just there” for support and love.

Cross References

Mark 15:1:

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Mark 15:2:

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Mark 15:3:

Psa. 38:14; Is. 53:7; Matt. 27:12-14; Mark 14:60-61, 15:5; Luke 23:2-5; John 18:29-31, 19:6-7, 12

Mark 15:4:

Psa. 38:14; Matt. 26:62, 27:12-13; Mark 14:60; Luke 23:1-2; John 19:10

Mark 15:5:

Psa. 38:14, 71:7; Is. 8:18, 53:7; Zech. 3:8; Matt. 27:12-14; Mark 14:60; John 19:9; 1Cor. 4:9

Mark 15:6:

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Mark 15:7:

Matt. 27:16; Luke 5:32, 23:18-19, 25; John 18:40

Mark 15:8:

Ex. 12:6; Matt. 27:15; Luke 23:18

Mark 15:9:

Matt. 27:17-21; John 18:39, 19:4-5, 14-16; Acts 3:13-15

Mark 15:10:

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Mark 15:13:

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Psa. 69:4; Is. 53:3-9; Dan. 6:16; Matt. 27:4-19, 22-54; Luke 23:4-21, 23-24, 41-47; John 18:38, 19:6-15; Acts 7:54-57, 19:34, 22:22-23; Heb. 7:26; 1Pet. 1:19

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Mark 15:16:

Psa. 22:16; Matt. 20:19, 27:27; John 18:28, 19:9

Mark 15:17:

Job 30:1; Psa. 22:16, 69:12; Matt. 20:19, 27:28-30; Luke 23:11; John 19:2-5

Mark 15:18:

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Mark 15:20:

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Matt. 5:41, 16:24, 27:32; Luke 14:27, 23:26; John 15:18-20; Acts 2:10, 6:9, 11:20, 13:1; Rom. 16:13

Mark 15:22:

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Mark 15:23:

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Mark 15:24:

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